

Dear Mr. Mooring:

I read with interest the "Safe Routes to School" proposal for Wildwood. While I fully support the project, my primary concern is that the crosswalk plan needs to be altered due to speeding vehicles on East Pleasant. The existing 35 m.p.h. speed limit for the section of East Pleasant Street from Eames Avenue to Eastman Lane is too high, especially given traffic from the University of Massachusetts and the local elementary, middle, and regional high schools. The "Safe Routes to School" plan must be coupled with a reduced speed limit on East Pleasant and/or a traffic calming plan.

I am especially concerned with southerly traffic on East Pleasant from Clark Hill Road to the Strong Street intersection. There is a blind curve for traffic travelling south at the Clark Hill Road intersection. Further, there is limited sight distance from traffic travelling south around the blind curve and from Clark Hill Road to the Strong Street intersection. I fear that speeding cars will completely ignore schoolchildren attempting to cross East Pleasant Street at Strong Street and will cause an accident.

I will outline my argument for reducing the speed limit on East Pleasant Street below. My suggestions to the proposed "Safe Routes to School" plan are as follows:

1. The proposed crosswalk design is insufficient. I would strongly urge a speed table at the East Pleasant/Strong Street intersection, to reduce vehicle speed and to encourage motorists to yield to pedestrians. A secondary preference would be for a raised pedestrian crosswalk. A speed table or raised crosswalk designed for 30 m.p.h. speeds would not interfere with emergency vehicles; raised crosswalk structures already exist on Route 9 bordering Amherst College and downtown on East Pleasant Street. In addition, raised speed tables can reduce intersection crashes by a significant amount.

2. A neckdown or bulb-out would be appropriate at the East Pleasant/Strong Street intersection to slow traffic. Also, I am especially concerned that the present design has a turning radii which will only encourage motorists to speed up when entering or exiting these streets.

3. The proposed pedestrian flashed assembly should be supplemented by dynamic speed signs that would indicate to motorists that they are exceeding the speed limit.

4. In addition to the crosswalk improvements at East Pleasant/Strong Street, there is a great need for similar crosswalk improvements at the corner of East Pleasant and Chestnut Street. This crosswalk is presently used much more frequently than the East Pleasant/Strong Street crosswalk. It will also serve as a safe route to school, as children use Chestnut Street to walk to the local schools. There is limited sight distance for southerly traffic at this intersection, as well, and I have seen numerous incidents of speeding

cars ignoring individuals either waiting to cross or in the crosswalk. I would suggest that this intersection be made a part of the "Safe Routes to School"

plan. I would suggest a speed table, a splitter island, or mini traffic circle, as well as sidewalk improvements, at the corner of East Pleasant and Chestnut.

5. Landscaping on East Pleasant to narrow the optical width of the roadway. This can be accomplished by planting shade trees along publicly owned land or by encouraging landowners (perhaps with town assistance) to plant shade trees on their property adjacent to the roadway. Landscaping would be part of the comprehensive traffic calming plan for East Pleasant and would help beautify the street and indicate to motorists heading south that they are passing from a rural to an urban environment.

While I recognize that the present 35 m.p.h. speed limit is justified by traffic studies, the design speed is subject to revision based upon such factors as crash experience, roadway geometrics, parking, pedestrians, curves, adjacent development, and engineering judgment. In addition, the TEC report notes that Wildwood School staff has expressed concerns about speeding on East Pleasant Street. (The report notes the staff is concerned about the "30 m.p.h. speed limit" - it is actually 35 m.p.h.) The TEC report notes that the 85th percentile speed on East Pleasant Street is 45 m.p.h.

The following are the primary reasons for reducing speed in this segment of East Pleasant Street:

1. Crosswalk at East Pleasant and Chestnut Street.
2. Crosswalk at East Pleasant and Strong Street.
3. Roadway characteristics: bike lanes on both sides of East Pleasant Street.
4. Site distance: blind curve heading south on East Pleasant north of the Clark Hill Road intersection and limited sight distance to East Pleasant/Strong Street crosswalk; blind curve heading south on East Pleasant Street north of Mount Pleasant intersection and limited sight distance to East Pleasant/Chestnut Street crosswalk.
5. Roadside development: increasing rental housing use on East Pleasant Street leads to greater number of cars per dwelling unit, greater number of cars entering and exiting directly onto East Pleasant Street on a daily basis. (College students tend to come and go much more frequently than do other residents and tend to have many more visitors; there is a lot of backing into traffic from driveways.)
6. Parking practices: zoning restrictions for parking at rental housing is generally unenforced by town; parking at rental houses on East Pleasant Street itself on east side of East Pleasant Street.
7. Pedestrian and bicycling activity, especially during the school year.
8. Collision rates: I reviewed the town's crash data for 2006 through 2008. During these three years, approximately six and one-half (6 ½%) percent of all motor vehicle crashes in Amherst occur on East Pleasant Street. This is an unacceptable rate and is evidence that the East Pleasant Street speed limit is too high.

9. Traffic volume trends: traffic volume on East Pleasant has increased considerable since the 35 m.p.h. speed limit was first created.

10. Entering traffic conflicts: exists on west side of East Pleasant at: Clark Hill Road (blind curve for traffic heading south on East Pleasant), Pokeberry Ridge and "eyebrow" on East Pleasant (blind curve for traffic heading north on East Pleasant Street), "eyebrow" on East Pleasant (difficult to view cars and bicycles heading south on East Pleasant), Mount Pleasant (blind curve for traffic heading south on East Pleasant). Exists on east side of East Pleasant at: Strong Street (numerous accidents), cars exiting driveways on east side of East Pleasant (especially numerous rental houses), and Chestnut Street.

Thank you,

Kerry Strayer
226 East Pleasant Street
Amherst, MA 01002